

played freely and co-operatively with the others, and could safely be left without any intervention.

Other children exemplified this in a less extreme way; and it can be taken as true in general that the need to be quarrelsome and domineering with other children disappears as achievement in personal skill and in social relations slowly develops.

(c) *Possessiveness*. The problem arises of children's quarrels over property, and the need to train them in co-operative sharing of common property, as well as in the willingness to lend and borrow private goods. I have shown the very great strength of the impulse of ownership in young children, and the complex psychological meanings which it has for them. It seems to me a cardinal point in the education of very young children not to press too hard at high standards of unselfishness.

First of all, we need to recognise the rights of the private owner and to respect the child's possessions, as we look to him to respect ours. It is better to lead the children towards mutual respect of ownership rights, than to ride roughshod across this impulse and insist upon their sharing everything. It not seldom happens that adults attempt to train children to a degree of disinterestedness which the adults in question are quite incapable of themselves. (I quote in a footnote a letter which illustrates the qualms which even an obviously sensible mother can have about respecting her little daughter's sense of ownership.)<sup>1</sup> I do not believe that it is a sound moral training for children to be made to live up to unreal standards of so-called unselfishness, and to be compelled to share things they wish to cherish even at the risk of having them broken.

<sup>1</sup> " Grace is not really a selfish child, but when she has any little friends to play with her, she often resents their touching her

toys. This is, I think, because during the last few months her tea-set, sewing machine and other treasures, with which she played so carefully, have been broken by some of these visitors. She is careful with her possessions, but some of the other children have been most destructive. Grace is very distressed about this. She loves companionship and used to give the visitors a free hand with her toy box, but this unselfishness has brought its punishment. Nearly every time we have children here, something is broken. Grace is an only child and I do not want to spoil her or teach her not to share her toys, but I do sympathise with her when she comes to me in tears with a broken doll or torn book. There is no shop here where any skilled repairing can be done, or any toys bought. I have now suggested that the favourite toys should be put away before the children arrive. Do you think this is unwise ? "